

THE LEGEND OF EDENDALE

Film buffs will recognize that the name Edendale holds a special place in film history. In 1910 (when Hollywood was still a quiet farming and retirement community), the first permanent movie studios in Los Angeles were founded in Edendale, a small valley on Alessandro Street (now Glendale Boulevard) a few miles north of downtown and about a mile down the street from where THE EDENDALE GRILL now stands. It was here in 1909 that director **Francis Boggs** and actor **Tom Santschi** of the **Selig-Polyscope Company** opened the first permanent movie studio in Los Angeles. Among other milestones, this studio made the first films with comedian **Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle** and cowboy legend **Tom Mix**, as well as the first film version of *The Wizard Of Oz*.

Encouraged by the reports of continuous sunshine (most filming was done outdoors then), in 1910 the New York Motion Picture Company's **Fred Balshofer** rented a former grocery and barnyard three blocks down the street for their **Bison** westerns. Both companies frequently used the nearby Echo Park and Griffith Park for their "location" shots. Two years later, Bison hired young director **Thomas H. Ince**, who moved the company to Santa Monica soon after.

To occupy the former Bison lot, the NYMPC drafted actor-director-screenwriter **Mack Sennett** and actress **Mabel Normand** to make Keystone comedies. Literally within months, Sennett would corner the comedy market, creating the **Keystone Kops** and perfecting slapstick comedy and car chases. Normand, who created the art of pie throwing and became one of the first female directors, helped Sennett nurture the talents of Arbuckle, **Harold Lloyd**, and a little fellow named **Charlie Chaplin** (who nearly quit after his first film!). Other Sennett veterans include **Gloria Swanson**, **Wallace Beery**, **Frank Capra** and **Carole Lombard**, who was one of Sennett's legendary **Bathing Beauties**, the first modern pin-up girls. In 1914, Keystone also made the first feature-length comedy, *Tillie's Punctured Romance*.

Around the same time, Sennett's former mentor **D.W. Griffith** relocated to the **Majestic-Reliance** film lot at 4500 Sunset Boulevard (between Vermont Ave. and Hollywood Blvd.), where Los Feliz and the Franklin Hills now meet. There Griffith began work on what would become his 1915 epic, **The Birth Of A Nation**, one of the most controversial yet significant features in film history. Renamed **Triangle-Fine Arts** after a merger, this is where Griffith also filmed **Intolerance** (building the 12-story-high Babylon set across the street, where the Vista Theatre now stands), **Broken Blossoms** and others. Fine Arts veterans include **Douglas Fairbanks Sr.**, **Lillian** and **Dorothy Gish**, **Anita Loos**, **Norma** and **Constance Talmadge**, and **Erich Von Stroheim**.

Other studios flourishing in the area at the same time, included the **Mabel Normand Company** at Fountain and Effie Streets, later used by cowboy legend **William S. Hart**; **Lubin** on Sunset Blvd., later used by **Monogram/Allied** (home of the **Bowery Boys**); and **Vitagraph**, on Talmadge Street. All three of these studios survive today, as the Mack Sennett Stage, KCET-TV, and the Prospect Street Studios.

During the teens and twenties, several other studios sprouted in Edendale and the Silver Lake area, including **Pathé** and the original **Walt Disney Studios** at 2719 Hyperion Avenue, where the Gelson's Market now stands, just blocks from the Edendale Grill. This site saw the creation of **Mickey Mouse** as well as the monumental animated features **Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs**, **Fantasia**, and **Bambi**. Elsewhere in Silver Lake, **Laurel & Hardy** made their 1932 Academy Award-winning film *The Music Box* on the exhausting steps at 925 Vendome Street, a block south of Sunset Blvd. And in 1916, before he merged with 20th Century, **William Fox** had his first West Coast studio on the former Selig lot, when his stars included **Theda Bara** and **Tom Mix**.

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